

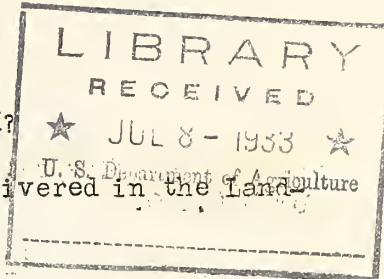
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HAVE STANDARDS OF LIVING CHANGED ON THE FARM?

A radio talk by Madge J. Reese, Extension Service, delivered in the Land Grant College radio program, Wednesday, May 17, 1933.



Have standards of living changed on the farm? Yes. For better or worse? Both. In times of economic depression we are compelled to bring down our expenditures to fit the decreased income but it is a good test of our resourcefulness and our spiritual ability if we can still maintain a reasonable, satisfactory standard of living on less income.

Rural America can always be depended upon to rise to meet situations in time of adversity. Several millions of the six million farm families are making themselves the masters of their own destiny, intelligently studying living problems and hitting upon a sensible solution, in spite of the low price of farm commodities. With an adequate garden, poultry flock, ample storage of home cured and canned meats, and a full pantry of canned fruits and vegetables for winter, planned by a balanced canning budget, if you please, farm families are facing the world with confidence. A banker in one Texas county said recently that in his county more debts have been paid by farmers with 5 cent cotton this year than were ever paid in any prosperous year, and it was "the living at home" that had done it. Raising from 40 to 60% of the food supply has been about the rule on good farms in the past. Many farm families are now raising 75 to 90%. In 1932, farm women in 33 States increased family incomes by conducting 505 co-operative markets selling \$1,150,000 of farm home products. This income helped to keep the family automobiles running, children in school, pay taxes and buy groceries.

What about clothing? There is little cash to spend for new clothing, but farm women have learned how to do much with little at home demonstration clothes clinics. A Connecticut farm woman was greatly thrilled the other day when she went into a shop and found a coat almost identical in material and design to the one she made at the coat school. The shop coat was priced \$50 while her coat cost \$10. Forty dollars for her time and skill. Speaking of clinics, Ohio farm women do not intend to let things go to rack and ruin because of a depression. They have been holding sewing machine clinics, oil stove clinics, window shade clinics and so keeping the farm home in repair. Home improvements are being made with little expenditure of money, all of which have added comfort and attractiveness and have worked wonders in keeping up morale.

Some of the past is being recaptured and handicrafts of good design and workmanship have been revived in farm homes. Does it pay? It isn't always necessary to ask that question. Handicraft pays because it gives satisfactions which money is powerless to produce, the pleasure of creative accomplishment, the satisfaction of adorning homes and often the affectionate preservation of something for future generations. We would not want to "turn back the hands of the clock" but when and where the life of a people centered around their handicraft there was peace, contentment and happiness. Tennessee women and girls in one rural community proved that high quality home handicraft can have economic

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value, when they sold in one year 500 hooked rugs for \$5,000 and 10,000 mats for \$10,000.

Recreation like everything else on the farm except weeds, refuses to take care of itself. At this time when there is little money to spend for commercial entertainment, like the movie and automobile touring, farm folks are creating their own forms of community entertainment to relieve the drab economic conditions. This develops resourcefulness and brings folks to a realization of a better sense of values. Inexpensive pleasures and cultural interests can, to a large extent, take the place of more expensive and sometimes artificial form of entertainment.

Secretary Wallace in a recent address made a very correct appraisal of conditions. "Ever since 1920 hundreds of thousands of farm families have had to do without civilized goods and services which in normal times they were glad and eager to buy. Since 1929, millions of farm people have had to patch their garments, store their cars and tractors, deprive their children of educational opportunities..... They have been forced to let their homes and other buildings stand bare and unpainted, eaten by time and the weather... .. they have been forced to adopt frontier methods of bare sustenance at a time when in the old surging, unlimited sense of the word, we have no longer a frontier."

Intelligent sympathy and practical aid for self-help have been given in many cases by farm people themselves to their neighbors in need. Out of this day has come an increase in richness of human experience which enhances rather than lowers the standard of living. There is a limit, however, to remodeling and repairing and the time inevitably comes for replacement. There is no escaping the fact that the buying power of the farmer must be increased. Out of our present economic troubles we are moving toward a new national policy for agriculture that will insure a satisfactory standard of living in the country. That is simply social justice. All forces interested in rural America and the general prosperity of the country are now directing their energies toward making a higher standard of living possible. The genius of America will be satisfied with nothing less and agriculture and industry finally will be adjusted and organized to give us a rural standard of living to which America can point with pride and which will maintain the stability of our Nation.